"Mrs Robinson Crusoe"

by

IDELLE S. MENG

ILLUSTRATED BY F. E. HILEY

A bride of only four months' standing, Mrs. Meng accompanied her husband to the loneliest islands in the Pacific—a little-known group of uninhabited *atolls* lying only a few feet above sea-level and a thousand miles from the nearest land. Here, with two men, three rabbits, and a dog "Friday," she lived for eleven long months, meeting with experiences that make most fascinating reading.

II.—(*Conclusion.*)

AFTER six weeks on our tropic isle we found it necessary to move nearer to Cooper, where the copra-shed was located. So the odd lumber and the corrugated roofing were rafted across the lagoon to a tiny islet, which we christened in punning fashion "Ourile." Here, beneath the low-spreading palms, we built a "lean-to" consisting of three rooms, which faced the direction from which we got the least bad weather. We chose this small islet owing to the fact that it could be kept clear of leaves and brush, so that the crabs would have no place to hide. At low tide only could we go from Ourile to Cooper on dry land, although the two islets were only a couple of hundred feet apart.

Although everything about our camp was primitive, we had it as conveniently arranged as possible. Our floors were pure white coral sand, cool and easily kept clean. Our water supply was caught in big Oriental stone jars placed beneath the eaves in front of the shack. The "lawn" was smooth, white sand with a small palm here and there surrounded by large conch-shells.

As fish was our main diet we found it rather tiresome to fish three times a day, in spite of the fact that it was no task at all to catch as many as you liked. So we built a woven wire pen in a nearby channel, and kept it filled with live fish, scooping them out with a net as often as we needed them. In this way it was not necessary to fish more than a couple of times a week.

The men worked early and late with the copra, while I took care of the copra-shed and looked after the culinary department. I had, however, plenty of leisure for exploring, and with "Friday"—who had by this time grown to be a big dog—I spent much of my time wandering from one islet to another. The edge of the lagoons often held my attention for hours at a time. I started a shell collection, and would wade to remote shoals in my search for new specimens. At first the men felt uneasy when I took these long rambles, as the waters were full of sharks; but after they had witnessed the way I handled a cane-knife when attacked by one too-inquisitive brute they felt that I was capable of taking care of myself.

I remember on one occasion a huge black conger eel poked his ugly head from a crevice in the coral rock on which I was standing fishing, and rubbed against my bare legs in his endeavour to reach the net that contained my catch of fish. I immediately beat a hasty retreat and started fishing farther down the lagoon. The eel followed me, and when he got his fangs tangled in the mesh of the net I stunned him by giving him a blow on the head with my knife. His skin was so tough that it did not even make an indentation in it. Thinking him dead, I looped my leather belt around his ugly throat and dragged him through the shallow water to the shack. When my husband saw me coming he thought I was bringing in a big fish, so he came out to meet me. He was horrified that I should have come in close contact with such a monster, and was even more so when he discovered, on removing the belt, that the eel was very much alive. He weighed forty-four pounds and was five and a half feet in length.

In spite of the fact that I enjoyed the out-door life, I sometimes longed for people and things that I had left behind. There were times when I yearned for the sight of another woman—to hear one speak, and to have some young woman of my own age as a companion.

When we left Honolulu our little syndicate had been incorporated as the "Island of

Palmyra Copra Company." Beside my husband, there were four other stock-holders, and it was arranged that Mr. Meng was to study conditions on Palmyra, and make charts of channels, shoals, and so on, so that places for docks and warehouses could be decided upon. Benner was to be his assistant. They were, of course, to make as much copra as they could, doing their surveying meanwhile.

The copra schooner of our nearest neighbours, the Fanning Island people, made four trips a year between their islands and Honolulu. These islands are British possessions and lie about two hundred miles south of Palmyra. Beside being a large copra plantation, Fanning is also a cable station on the line between Vancouver and Australia. Arrangements had been made for the Fanning schooner to call at Palmyra, bringing our supplies, labourers, and mail, and taking out our copra—and ourselves at any time we wished to go.

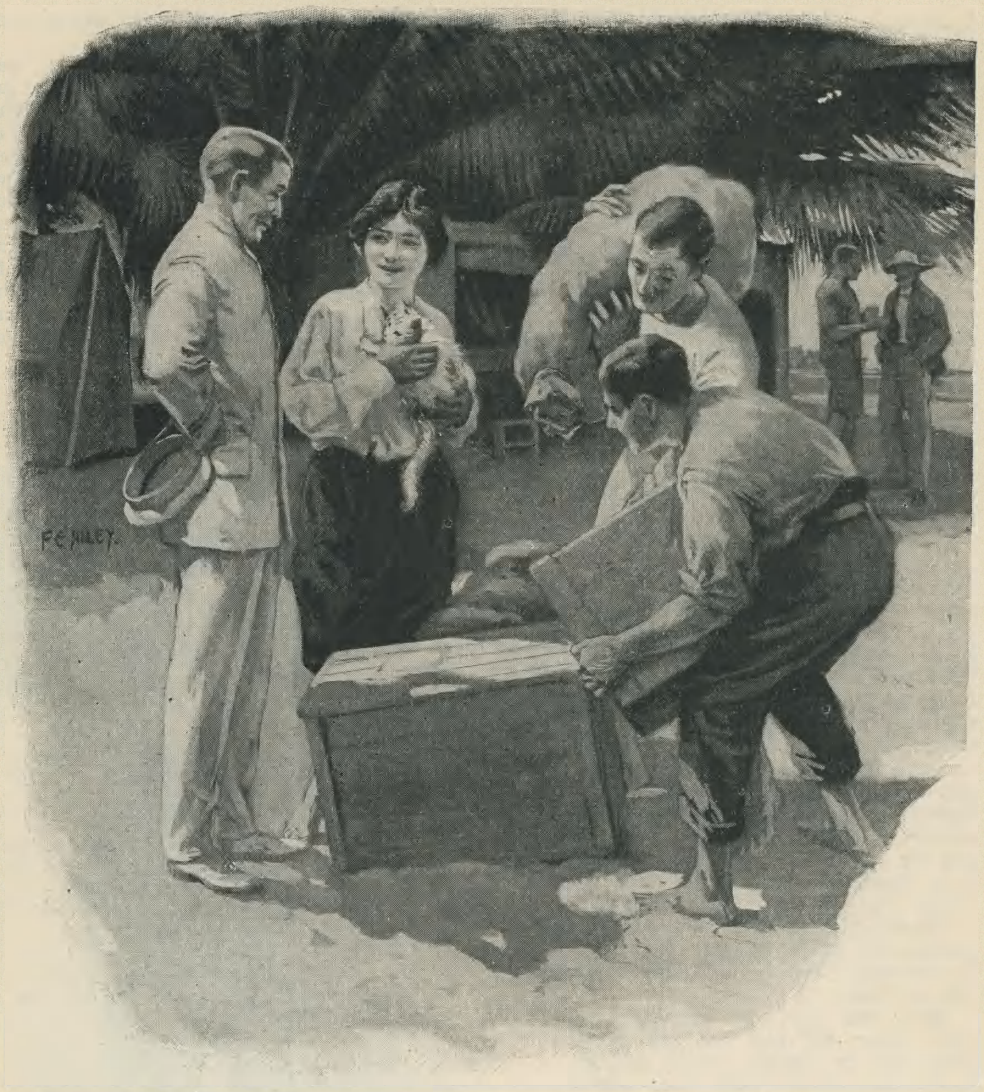
Four months, however, had now come and gone, and there were no traces of a boat. Our supplies were getting low, also our spirits. Then, one Sunday morning, during the last week in February, a sail was sighted to the south-west, headed toward Honolulu. This was the first sign we had had in four long months that there was anyone else on the Pacific Ocean. Great excitement prevailed in our little camp. Our mail was thrown together in a bag and we started out towards the open ocean in our little boat. However, the sailing vessel did not see the smoke that was pouring up from the signal-fire we had left on the beach behind; and in a short time she tacked and was soon only a dim outline in the distance.

We returned to our little abode beneath the palms with heavy hearts—I even had tears in my eyes. By the next day it all seemed like a dream.

After this the days literally *dragged* by. For weeks we had had no flour, potatoes, or bacon—only canned foods and rice and the island resources. Our reading matter had long since been exhausted. Worst of all we had no shoes. Although we had started with five or six pairs each, the coral and salt water soon caused them to drop to pieces. We patched them with canvas as long as there was anything left to patch; then we tried making canvas ones out of old sails, but it was a hopeless job. Finally we learnt to go barefoot. It was agony at first, and the iodine bottle was in constant use, but at last our feet became accustomed to the sharp stones and coral.

Good Friday marked one of our "red-letter days." On that day, bright and early, a big steamer glided into our anchorage and dropped anchor about two miles out. Our little boat, which had originally been equipped with both sails and a motor, was now only a sailing boat, as her magneto had been out of commission for some time, and we were soon bobbing merrily over the lagoon toward the outer bar, headed for the steamer. We kept our glasses on her and wondered what sort of a boat she was, and why she had stopped at our little *atoll*.

"He rubbed against my bare legs in his endeavour to reach the net."



We soon made her out to be a freighter, and this discovery surprised us, for we were far out of the course of shipping and, in fact, few vessels of any kind ever sighted Palmyra.

After we had cleared the bar we saw a small motor-boat drop over the steamer's side and head toward us. We could also make out the men on deck, and soon noticed that they wore the uniform of Uncle Sam's navy, which puzzled us more than ever. We met the motor-boat halfway, lowered our sails and took the line they threw us. Much rejoicing took place when we found that one of the men on board the little craft was Edric Cooke, a young Honolulan, who was acting as Mr. Meng's attorney during his absence from Honolulu.

After "Friday" had been quieted—poor dog, she had never known anyone but we three!—Cooke jumped aboard our boat and we were soon being towed behind the motor-boat to the steamer, while Cooke did his best to answer the questions that we showered on him. He told us the United States had a new President, but that otherwise the world was still much where we had left it five months before; and then he began to explain why he was there.

The Fanning Island boat, it appeared, had changed its route and now went to San Francisco direct. It did not come by Honolulu at all, so we had been marooned all this time without knowing it. The Japanese, upon their return to Honolulu, had told a weird tale about getting lost, and it had been impossible to charter another

The supplies were carried ashore by the sailors under Benner's supervision."

local boat to visit us. As a last resort the United States naval authorities had been appealed to, the result being that this big collier, the U.S.S. *Nero*, had been permitted to deviate from her route to Samoa and call at Palmyra. Not only that, but Cooke had been allowed to accompany her in order that he might confer with my husband.

By the time we had learnt these facts we were ascending the gangway to the deck above. The mate met us at the head of the stair and gave us a hearty greeting. Sailors surrounded us on every side, adding greatly to " Friday's " fright.

We were escorted to the captain's cabin, where this kind and courteous gentleman had breakfast waiting for us. Although the menu consisted of things we had longed for, we did not eat a great deal, owing to excitement.

There are very few occasions when a woman fails to think of her personal appearance, and at this unusual time I took a mental inventory of our attire. The handsome skipper, Captain Lewis, was immaculate in a spotless white uniform, and even his nails showed signs of recent grooming. Mr. Meng wore khaki breeches, a blue shirt open at the throat, and on the back of his chair hung his " Farmer John " hat. Young Benner looked positively comical in an extremely short and rather faded blue bathing-suit and a heavy sweater, and his green felt hat had certainly seen its best days. As for me, I wore black sateen bloomers, a white shirt of my husband's—thank goodness it was clean !—a straw hat, a red bandana, and my hair in a braid. All three of us, of course, were barefoot. Fortunately the men were freshly shaven and had had recent hair-cuts—the latter being a work of art executed by the only female barber on Palmyra.

" Mail ! Mail ! " yelled a petty officer, and he marched into the room and deposited on the floor the biggest mail-bag I ever saw.

Grin ? You should have seen him ! He was the first man in the history of the Pacific Ocean who had ever delivered mail to Palmyra. Not only that, but he knew that we three isolated souls had not had a letter or messenger for five long months.

Then " Friday " proceeded to have a fight with the ship's mascot, an old grey cat. The battle was forced on her. She had never seen another animal in her life except " Bun Boy," the rabbit ; and he had never shown signs of hostility. So, when this spitting, scratching whirlwind landed on her back, her one idea was to get between her master's feet and let off her surprise in unearthly yelps. After a few chairs had been overturned, the captain seized his cat and I rescued my dog, which I sent below in the custody of one of the officers.

Captain Lewis then told me that there was a half-grown cat aboard the ship which he would be glad to give me if I cared to have it. Did I care to have it ? I nearly

kissed his hand! So "Sir Jerry" was presented. He was snow white, with a few black markings. He could do tricks and had lovely manners. That kind-hearted captain will never know just what that white kitten meant to a lonely little woman on a lonely island in the Pacific.

After our provisions, mail, reading matter, and so on had been stored in the small boats, the officers and ourselves started for the islands in the motor-boat, with the small boats bringing up the rear, carrying about twenty-five men. We had to anchor a long way from "Ourile" as the tide was quite low, and the supplies were carried ashore by the sailors under Benner's supervision.

Mr. Cooke, after seeing the commercial value of Palmyra, agreed with my husband that it would be better to purchase a boat of our own rather than give up the proposition owing to lack of transportation. He therefore decided to go on to Samoa on the *Nero*, and then catch an Oceanic steamer back to Honolulu. I made up my mind to remain with my husband on Palmyra and come out on the sailing vessel, for I had no suitable clothes to wear on the Oceanic boat, and would have to go second-class, which I knew would not be pleasant. Besides, should the *Nero* meet bad weather before reaching Samoa she would probably miss connection with the boat that was sailing for Honolulu, when I should have to spend a whole month at Samoa.

Therefore, after having dinner that night in the officers' dining-room, we bade them all good-bye and climbed down into our little boat, pulled away from the big freighter, and saw her propeller splash as the anchor came up.

"Good-bye! Good luck! God bless you!" called the mate from the bridge as the steamer began to move.

"Aye, aye!" we answered, and then our sails filled and we started to get back to our little palm-clad *atoll*.

At midnight we anchored near the shack, and portaged our supplies ashore. We built a fire, cooked the fresh meat, and started reading our letters. Far into the morning we sat there reading letter after letter from our families and friends. Some few were from strangers who had read of our venture in the papers, and wrote either to congratulate us or to gain information about the Pacific Isles. It was sun-up when we finished.

April, May, and June dragged slowly by. We had nearly forgotten the visit of the *Nero;* it seemed like a dream. "Jerry," the little white cat, was the only evidence of the steamer's reality. The sailors' shoes and heavy socks that we had purchased had lasted only a few weeks, and once again we were barefoot. Once more, too, our larder was nearly empty. We had worked steadily, and we watched anxiously for a sail on the horizon. "Friday" had learned some new tricks, "Bun Boy" the rabbit had adopted "Jerry," and "Jerry" had got his land legs and was a regular "shore" cat.

July found our larder a mere stack of canned beans, corn, and tomatoes. We had cut ourselves down to two meals a day, which consisted mainly of island rescurces. Our frying-pans had burned full of holes, and after vain efforts had been made to cement them with salt and ashes, they were discarded and the big black pot was used for frying fish as well as boiling cocoanut cabbage. The bottoms of our lanterns were leaking like sieves, and to save our precious oil we stood them in pie-tins, pouring the oil back into the lantern when the tin was full. Every day we had to invent a new makeshift for something that rusted or wore out.

Looking for ships got to be a wild mania with us. Again our reading matter was exhausted; we read some of the magazines over for the second or third time. We hunted shells desperately and madly to keep from growing despondent.

Every evening the three of us watched the wonderful sunsets from the north-west beach, at the same time straining our eyes for some speck on the horizon that might turn out to be a sail. Sometimes a booby, flying low on the horizon, or a white-cap far out at sea, would send us running to the house for the glasses.

The last week in August found Mr. Meng sick in bed—the first and only illness we had on the islands. He had an old shrapnel wound that had never given him any trouble since the War was over, but now—owing, no doubt, to bad diet—it broke out and caused him a great deal of pain. Benner and I took turns at night taking care of him. Our medicine chest had been well stocked by a physician, and we tried everything that it contained, but nothing seemed to give him any relief.

One day I stacked the remainder of our supplies on the table and took stock. They would last six days, perhaps; then there would be nothing but fish—and coconuts. In our minds we planned wild schemes of rigging up our twenty-five-foot sail-boat and starting for Fanning Island. Had we done such a thing I should not be here to write the tale.

On August 28th smoke was seen on the horizon to the south-west. *Was* it smoke, or was it a water-spout? We strained our eyes and took turns using the glasses. Yes; it *was* smoke! Presently you could see the tips of masts and wireless outfit! Glory! But wait—we must do something to stop her!

The ship was directly west of us, bearing north-east; so at the same time that she was drawing nearer she was also passing by to the north. Would she be too far past by the time she was near enough to see our signal?

We started a fire with copra and dry leaves; then we piled green leaves and grass on the leaping flames. A great column of black smoke curled to the sky. By this time the ship was nearly past; the top of her bridge was barely visible. My heart sank to my bare feet. There was life, food, people—a doctor perhaps—not more than seven miles away! And yet—— Look! She was turning! Her two masts were in line! Saved, thank goodness!

Benner and I grabbed the bag of mail and started for the sail-boat, anchored near by. Mr. Meng went back to bed thoroughly exhausted. In a very few minutes we were bobbing over the blue lagoon toward the anchorage.

During the first part of our trip I managed to write a short note to my mother. I knew that when the letters reached my family in Texas and our friends in Honolulu they would wonder how on earth we managed to get our mail out from the islands. The brief explanation I wrote her was something like this:—

"Finally I got hold, shut my eyes, gritted my teeth, and made a jump."

"DEAREST MOTHER,—Benner and I are sailing out to a big steamer that is anchored three miles out. We don't know what she is, where she is bound for, nor what she will do to us when we reach her. Billy is laid up with an old shrapnel wound; but don't be alarmed, he will be all right in a day or so. Other letters I am mailing you will give you news up to date. Have been well, but anxious. We stopped the boat with a smoke signal. Hurriedly, and with much love.

"DELL."

By the time I had completed this rather breathless missive, we had reached the tiny channel that leads out into the open sea. Benner turned the tiller over to me, took the sheet, and helped the tiny craft to dodge submerged coral-heads by drawing in or letting out the boom.

The glasses had been left with my husband, so we were quite near the steamer before we could make out what sort of vessel she was. We discovered that she was not anchored but drifting; also that she was a huge freighter. The word *London* was soon visible on her stern, so we realized she was a British boat.

"Now see here, Dell," Benner rapidly addressed me, "since you are the elder and the lady of the party, you will no doubt be expected to do all the talking; so remember to tell the captain of your husband's connection with the British army. Explain to him that both of you are British subjects, and emphasize the fact that we are out of food and very despondent. We have stopped this boat, they have had to 'lay to' for an hour waiting for us to get out to them, and everything depends on the attitude of the officers as to how we shall be received."

We could now plainly see about seventy-five men lined up along the rail eagerly watching our approach. We noted here and there glasses being handed from one man to another, while their wild gesticulations assured us that they were as much excited over being stopped at sea as we were over stopping them. Since all charts show Palmyra to be an uninhabited island it is no wonder that they were astonished to be signalled from there.

While we were eagerly watching the movements of the men, I felt a sudden twist of the tiller, and the rudder became a dead weight in my hand. I yelled to Benner and he came aft, and discovered that the steel eyes that support the rudder were worn through. We hauled the heavy rudder in and Benner grabbed one of the oars and steered with that, while he ordered me to take the boom-line. When I turned my back toward the steamer and grasped the line, the men along the rail could plainly see the dark braid of hair outlined against my white blouse, and a shout went up: "One of 'em is a woman!" Benner and I both wore straw hats, white shirts, and wading breeches, so they had taken us to be men until my hair betrayed my sex.

By the time all the fellows had had another squint at us through the glasses we were alongside and had caught their line and let down our sails. A sea-ladder was lowered from the deck, thirty feet above, and I was asked to "Come right up." I took a deep breath and braced myself to put foot for the first time off United States territory.

The steamer rolled and pitched; the small boat bobbed and plunged. Sometimes we crashed against the steel sides of the big vessel; the next plunge threw us eight feet away from her. I had no more than made up my mind to mount the ladder than the little boat would drop down six or seven feet and the ladder would be jerked from my grasp; then I would come riding up so fast that I had no chance to grab it as I passed by. Finally I got hold, shut my eyes, gritted my teeth, thought of the mustang colts I used to ride back in Texas, and made a jump. When I opened my eyes I saw that I had landed on the third step from the bottom, my body swaying like a pendulum.

Up, up, up, I went. Should I *never* reach the top? My swiftly moving thoughts were something like this: "Oh, I wish mother and Billy could see me climbing this ladder! Suppose I fell! Would I be crushed between the steamer and the boat, or would the sharks get me? I wonder which would be the most painful?"

At this point woman's vanity came to my rescue, and I happened to remember that the straw hat I was wearing had the whole top torn out, and I wondered how a "bird's-eye" view looked. I knew that my hair was horribly rough; no doubt it was sticking through the top of my dilapidated headgear.

Suddenly I saw two nice white shoes in line with my hat-brim! How funny! There were a pair of feet in them, and the feet protruded from nice white duck breeches! An officer, of course! Then an immaculate, strong-looking hand appeared close to my face. How white it was, how clean! I glanced at my own hands, clinging to the ladder, smeared with tar from the Jacob's ladder, and brown from the tropical sun. It suddenly occurred to me how strong and sure my hands looked in spite of the tan and grime. My thoughts were carried away from the comparison of hands by the sound of the most encouraging voice I ever heard, saying: "Just take my hand, little girl; I will pull you up."

I dreaded putting my grimy brown hand into that clean big one, but it was a nice voice, so I took the proffered hand. Sure enough, I was pulled right up! My bare feet rested on the steel deck; my blinking eyes stared into the face of a young officer; while some fifty or sixty men stood curiously by. Five pairs of hands helped me over the rail. I could not speak, and it seemed that I had not taken a breath since I left the small boat thirty feet below.

"Quite an experience, madam!" said the young officer, bowing.

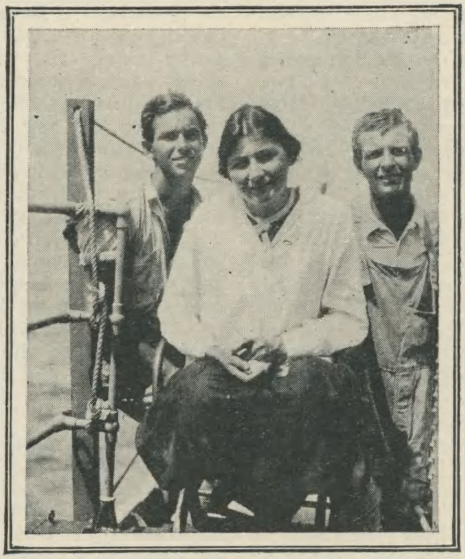
I thought so myself, but could not tell him what I thought just then. I only gulped and stared.

"May I see your captain?" I finally blurted out, after what seemed a whole ten minutes.

"Follow me, madam," answered the officer.

I started after him. The men fell back and gave us passage. I meekly followed the officer up the steel stair, and when we reached the next deck he pointed to another stair leading to the bridge, telling me the captain would receive me there. He then returned to escort Benner.

I learned from the captain that this was an Australian freighter, *en route* from New Zealand to San Francisco, *viâ* Suva, Fiji. She had formerly been a German boat, but was taken over by the British. The captain was wonderfully kind and obliging. After Benner joined us we managed to make our story clear, and the officer showed us every consideration. He sent a wireless for us, took our mail, and gave us supplies. For the latter he refused to take a cheque, stating that some day his ship might go to pieces on our reef, when he would have to depend on *our* hospitality.



The Authoress with her husband (right) and Edwin Benner.

Forty-five minutes after I ascended that terrible sea-ladder I descended it, hung to the bottom for a second, then closed my eyes and jumped toward the small, bobbing boat, landing safely on a bag of potatoes. We rowed away from the steamer a short distance, saw her great propellers begin to turn, waved to the captain, then hoisted our sails and began our first tack towards Palmyra.

It took three hours to get in as we were headed into the wind. Before we reached the anchorage we spied my sick husband, accompanied by "Friday" and "Jerry," waiting for us on the beach. After explaining all the details of our visit aboard the steamer, and answering his eager questions, we proceeded to examine our stores. There we found ham, beans, flour, tea, coffee, sugar, spices, and beef-tea, besides a great bag of books, magazines, newspapers, and smokes for the men.

During the long summer the young men in Honolulu who were connected with our firm had been nearly desperate over our predicament. They had heard of a sailing-vessel that was to make a trip to Fanning Island, the British cable station two hundred miles south-east of Palmyra. This boat was evidently the one that Cooke had in mind to charter when he returned to Honolulu. They made arrangements with her captain to stop at Palmyra and leave supplies and mail for us; also to relieve our minds by telling us that our own boat, which was under construction in Honolulu, would soon be completed and would come and fetch us.

The sailing-vessel duly went to Fanning, but when she left there she had to slip her anchor. She then stopped at Washington Island, another of the Fanning group, and there she lost her second and last anchor. So, when Palmyra was sighted, the captain decided it would be suicide to try to make the anchorage in such a fierce gale as was blowing, and they sailed on. We did not even see the vessel. When she reached Honclulu she reported that no sign of life had been seen on our island.

The motor for our new craft was ordered from Chicago, but was lost in transit; so another had to be ordered, after several weeks had been spent in trying to trace the original one. All these things made our friends' faces grow longer and their uneasiness increase. Then, on August 29th, Joseph Stickney, the young President of the Company, received my wireless message from the British vessel, which read:—

"No supplies. Despondent. Expect aid soon. Meng."

That was the last straw! Stickney dared not tell Benner's family or my cousin, Judge Kemp, who resided in Honolulu, of our predicament, so he jumped into his car and sped to the Naval Base at Pearl Harbour. There he got in touch with Commander R. D. Kirkpatrick, head of the Naval Air Service in the Hawaiian Islands. Thrusting the message into the officer's hands, he burst out:—

"Commander, you recently stated you hoped some day to make a survey of the Palmyra group. If you are going to do so, for Heaven's sake go now!"

Just three weeks later the U.S.S. *Eagle Forty* drifted into our anchorage, and we three sailed out to her in our little boat. Mr. Meng, owing to proper diet, had quite recovered from his recent illness.

When we were some distance away we were sure that the boat was the *Forty*, as she is quite a familiar object around the

harbour of Honolulu, being the regular tender for the big seaplanes that do survey work around the Hawaiian group. We were glad, for we realized that Uncle Sam had turned his eagle eye upon this wee dot in the Pacific.

As we drew nearer we could see the wings of the great plane the ship carried, the white uniforms of the sailors, and we were soon staring into the lens of the big cameras that snapped repeatedly as we approached.

I don't suppose a more dishevelled group of guests ever lunched with the *Forty's* officers than we three self-made exiles. How we talked ! News was never so welcome to anyone before. We stayed aboard until the afternoon tide ; then the officers accompanied us ashore for the night.

Great excitement prevailed among the sea-birds the next day, as the huge seaplane soared and swooped above the islands. All day long the cameras were busy taking " bird's-eye " views of our beautiful little *atoll*. Groups of sailors added splashes of white to the green background of the islands as they made explorations along the beaches.

I seemed to be in a trance all day. After such long isolation it seemed impossible to believe my eyes when I looked out and saw the dozens of men, to say nothing of the seaplane circling high above the lagoons.

On the first evening that the *Forty's* officers were with us, I discovered two very interesting things : First, that Commander Kirkpatrick and I were born and reared within thirty miles of each other and had many mutual friends ; second, that I was to be permitted to accompany the *Forty* upon her return trip to Honolulu, as her doctor felt that the strain had been too much for me.

Upon the third morning after the boat's arrival our usually well-kept yard was in great disorder. My bags and trunks were piled in a heap in front of the house, with the baggage of the officers. The small boats were drawn up at the side, and the plane took a farewell flight over the islands and then dropped beside the *Forty* ready to be hoisted aboard.

At ten o'clock all was in readiness for us to put out to the waiting steamer. I had a dull ache in my heart as I gazed around the familiar groves of palms. How calm and peaceful it all looked ! The long stretches of beach had never seemed so white and inviting, nor the lagoons so blue. I even had a kindly thought for the clumsy old boobies as they waddled along the edge of the water. " Friday " and " Jerry " made a lump come in my throat as they rubbed affectionately against my feet. When I noticed the forlorn faces of my husband and Benner my heart was nearly broken.

The motor-dory which carried me away from my island home towed in its wake the *Forty's* lifeboat, her wherry, and our own little punt. When we made a turn the last I saw of the tiny islet that had been my home for so long was a brown dog and a white cat snuggled close together on the sand. I have often thought of those little pets of mine since, wondering how many times they have stationed themselves in that same spot, looking out to sea for the mistress who never returned.

Benner and my husband stayed aboard the *Forty* until the plane was hauled on deck ; then they were towed back to the edge of the lagoon by the motor-dory, which presently returned and was swung to its davits.

Exactly at twelve o'clock the bells jingled, the flag came down, the anchor was hoisted, and the whistle blew. The *Forty* was under way ! As soon as her propellers began to leave a swirling wake behind, a chair was placed for me on the bridge, and from there, through tears and field-glasses, I saw two men waving their hats and a brown dog wagging her tail. Gradually all of them became lost to sight against the background of their lonely isle.

I have been back in civilization some time now, and have got quite used to civilized surroundings ; but still, sometimes I long for Palmyra's beautiful solitude, her lagoons and tropical showers, her waving palms and booming surf.

For a while I was quite a curiosity ; I was pointed out in the street, and my pictures appeared in the papers accompanied by lengthy articles. Now, however, I am a conventional woman again, wearing conventional clothes, and living a conventional life.

Shall I ever go back ? Perhaps, some day. I would like to go on a short trip, accompanied by another woman—but not to live. I am glad, very glad, to have had this unusual experience ; glad to have been the first and only white woman to put foot on Palmyra ; and very proud of the fact that one of her beautiful little islets will bear the name of " Idelle " in my honour. But I shall not repeat the experience. The novelty has worn off, and it would not be an adventure again. Besides, Palmyra is no longer the loneliest island in the Pacific Ocean, for she is now the regular port of call for our Company's new schooner, which brings great loads of iced fish and dried copra to find a ready market in Honolulu. No ; Palmyra is a modern Pacific Isle now, with no lasting attraction for " Mrs. Robinson Crusoe."

THE END.